

Travelers in Southern Minnesota: Profile of Visitors to Four Communities

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Introduction

Statewide data speaks to the magnitude of tourism in Minnesota. However, critical to successful regional tourism planning & development in local communities is region specific data. The University & Explore MN tourism began partnering in 2000 to identify community & region travel data. This project continues that vein and focuses on 4 communities in Southern Minnesota: Blue Earth, Fairmont, Jackson, & Worthington.

Purpose

To profile visitors to 4 communities in Southern Minnesota. Specifically to obtain information on:

visitor trip characteristics, trip planning
area travel history,
expenditures, &
important destination attributes.

Methods

Sample

Self-identified Southern Minnesota visitors

Instrument

On-site questionnaire

Data Collection

Visitors comprised 40.2% of the 1,399 parties contacted & led to the collection of 326 questionnaires (57.9% acceptance rate)

Analysis

Descriptive analysis in SPSS with cleaned data



Results: Respondents

Demographics

Age: 50.0 Average, Range 18-91years

Gender: 50.0% Female

Household composition:

37.7% couple with children >18

26.9% couple with children <18

Income:

41.6% annual income \$70,000 or more

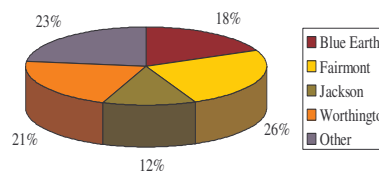
Trip History

89.2% previously visited area

Average 18.9 years as visitor to area

Average 5.1 trips in prior twelve months

Primary destination: 69.0% Southern Minnesota



Results: Trip Characteristics

Primary reason for trip:

21.2% pleasure or recreation

14.3% just passing through

14.0% business

Length of stay: 2.4 nights average, Range 1 to 21 nights

Accommodation type: 54.8% hotel; 14.9% friends/family

Party size: 3.5 Average, Range 1 to 20 people

Most important sources to create area awareness

Previous visit

Recommendation from friend/relative

Internet

Most important destination attributes:

Sightseeing Scenic drives

County parks/forest Fall colors

Festival/special event Natural environment

Average expenditures: daily/person

Lodging \$61.13 Restaurant/bar \$35.52

Transportation \$35.52 Shopping \$19.96

Recreation \$18.27 Groceries \$13.67



Discussion

Visitors in Southern Minnesota communities are mature, possess high-income status & exhibit a long history of travel to the area. Overall, visitors placed a high importance on scenic driving & sightseeing, as well as nature-based attractions. Therefore, marketing the areas rural character & natural surroundings is important. Further, given scenic driving is important to visitors in the area, efforts should be undertaken to develop scenic byways in the region.

Special thanks to Explore Minnesota Tourism, Blue Earth Area Chamber of Commerce, Fairmont Convention & Visitor Bureau, Jackson Chamber of Commerce, & Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce-Convention & Visitor's Bureau